

Husband and wife team up for classic Cobra kit car build



If you visited the Classic Car Competition at the Cleveland Auto Show last weekend, or went to the I-X Piston-Powered Auto-Rama this weekend, chances are you have already seen this 1965 Cobra with the Shobra vanity plates. It's a "kit car" from B&B Roadsters that was built by the husband and wife team of Tony and Janice Carrubba. It's not a donor, but is built from 95 percent new components.

"We searched for five years to find a company and a car that we liked," recalls Tony Carrubba, who works as a driveability performance specialist at Nick Mayer's Marshall Ford in Mayfield Heights. "We chose this kit because we liked the way the doors hang on steel. With all other Cobras, the seats go all the way down to the floor. I'm a little larger, so that can be a little uncomfortable. With this Cobra, the floor goes down six inches, which makes it a lot more comfortable when you are getting in and out of the car."

Working in the service department of a



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major dealership like Mick Mayer's Marshall Ford, it's easy to see how Tony would be comfortable taking on a project of this magnitude. What he didn't expect is the amount of time and effort his wife Janice poured into the project.

"We have been building it for the past eight years, and we both had a ball doing it," said Carrubba. "I didn't think she would even want to help me, until I had a little trouble putting in the third member of the rear end. But she dug right in and helped, which was very cool."

As the couple continued to work on the project, Tony began to realize that his wife had an affinity for custom builds, offering patience, insight and problem solving on several key areas of the build.

"First of all, the engine is the same Yamaha engine that is found in the Taurus SHO," says Carrubba. "It's built for front wheel drive, but I converted it to rear wheel drive for this project, so I was really biting off a little more than I could chew."

After solving the technical problems with the engine conversion, Carrubba drove the Cobra without the body in a local parking lot, just to see it would handle.



"I had driven a lot of Cobras and they always got pretty hot, so you are really baking behind the wheel," recalls Carrubba, "so I bought this aircraft insulation. The problem is that once you put the insulation on, that's it. If you want it off, you have to grind it off."

Carrubba started putting on the insulation, but soon found himself in trouble.

"She probably heard me cursing outside, and then came out to give me a hand," says Carrubba. "She had that insulation on the firewall in no time. It was like watching her wrap a Christmas present. She did it like it was a science."

Another time, when Carrubba was working on the wiring Janice came up with a process that simplified the installation.

"There is a specific procedure for the wiring that includes making sure that every connection is correct, before you solder, crimp and heat shrink the connection," says Carrubba.

But if the connection isn't correct, then you have to tear apart the connection and start all over. So Janice came up with the idea of putting all the connections in place to test them before anything else was done.

"She said 'honey, why don't you just get it running first, then we'll go back in and make sure everything is soldered and crimped,' she was always coming up with great suggestions like that to save time," says Carrubba.

As the build began to take form, Carrubba noticed that his wife was becoming more and more involved, developing a passion for both the vehicle and the process that was bringing it together.

"In the end, my wife Janice was not only handy, she also developed a real knack for building the car," says Carrubba. "She helped pick the interior carpeting and the seats. She even helped with the wet sanding."

"She was always there for a second opinion. And when I got in trouble, she always came to the rescue."

You can see the results of their build at the I-X Center today at the 49th Annual Summit Racing Equipment I-X Piston Powered Auto-Rama presented by Rad Air Complete Car Care and Tire Center. The show opens at 10 a.m. this morning and runs through 6 p.m. tonight.

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